

Ilam Library Stone Laid

A fund-raising drive by the Professorial Board, a grant from College funds, contributions from a student carnival and a Government subsidy enabled the University Library in the quadrangle to be built in 1916. It cost £3514. Last Saturday the Governor-General, Sir Arthur Porritt, laid the foundation stone of the James Hight Library at Ilam. To be completed over the next three years, the Library will be the biggest building in Christchurch. It will cost more than \$3million.

Some 300 guests watched his Excellency lay the foundation stone after an address in which he contested the views of the Mayor, Mr A.R. Guthrey, expressed at the last meeting of Council, that foundation stone ceremonies were unpopular, uncomfortable and uninteresting occasions.

To him foundation stones always seemed to offer a vision of the future, of unknown potentiality and exciting possibility, his Excellency said. He liked to think of them as architectural christenings with all the exciting variations of life ahead yet to be experienced and appreciated. "They give me a similar feeling to that one gets when a ship is launched. Today, for better or for worse, if I may mix my ceremonies, we are launching an educational ship of considerable magnitude into a sea of practical and cultural usage," Sir Arthur Porritt said. "Most students go to university to drink at the fountain of knowledge—only a tiny minority are content merely with gargling—and what better fountain of knowledge can a university have than a library?" he added.

The Minister of Education, Mr Talboys, said that as a graduate in arts he thought it only fitting that a building for the arts should dominate the Ilam campus. He said working drawings were now being prepared for four other buildings for arts departments and they would provide another 160,000 square feet of space.

The Chancellor, Mr T.H. McCombs, referring to the significance of the ceremony, said the new building was the first step in the final stage of the transfer of the University to Ilam. He expressed the University's thanks to the Government for approving the project and the University Grants Committee for making it possible. He also thanked the Ministry of Works, architects for the building, the

Librarian, Mr C.W. Collins, for his assistance in design work, and the contractor, C.S. Luney Ltd.

"Allegory of Aspiration"

"Behind me as I speak steel fingers rise from their concrete bed to reach for the sky, and it is tempting to see in them an allegory of aspiration," said the Vice-Chancellor (Professor N.C. Phillips). "For, when all the necessary addenda have been made, to what can a university more fitly aspire than the scrupulous scholarship and good learning which it is the primary purpose of a library to make possible? This occasion, then, is significant because the library is functionally central to the university. It is significant for at least three other reasons: the library will also be physically central to the university as its academic buildings are steadily deployed on this site. Then again, the library is the symbol of that farther shore to which, if I may adapt the Latin poet, those of us who are still stranded on the city site stretch out our hands with yearning: as it ascends, so do our hopes of reunion here at Ilam before the end of our centennial year of 1973. Finally, this library commemorates James Hight".

The Vice-Chancellor said that for many years after Canterbury College was founded, its library consisted of only a few hundred or a few thousand books, which were shelved round the walls of the hall and in a small room nearby. In 1916 the first real library building was opened, a charming but constricted neo-Gothic structure, wedged in the pleasant quadrangle on the site of the old "Tin Hut", where Ernest Rutherford uttered early syllables of genius.

Order and Economy

"This was still the library *par excellence* when I was a student and

had to borrow books from generous and trustful teachers, not least Sir James Hight. As late as the year 1939 books cost the College £648, as against this year's bill of about \$200,000. As the book stock grew, it was dispersed in numerous and curious depositories and it was not until after 1957 that the old library was able to expand into an area vacated by the School of Fine Arts. In 1966 the migration of the Faculty of Science to Ilam not only meant the opening of a new Sciences Library but also an opportunity for the main library to extend into new quarters across the quadrangle. The new Engineering Library was completed in 1967, so that the university's books are now scattered among the science, engineering and fine arts libraries at Ilam, two branches of the main library in the city and a quaint assortment of departmental cubby-holes, obscure nooks and crannies and dingy basements. When this vast new building becomes a physical fact, order and economy will at last, after many years, become possible in caring for a collection which will certainly total well over 300,000 volumes."

The planning of the building had been beset by many frustrations; but now the University looked forward, cheered by the progress evident since the tender was let to Charles S. Luney Ltd. last August. "Nothing is more heartening—at least to a university working to a very tight construction programme—than to see the skeleton of a building arise and take on flesh. Now the building is up to schedule and already about 10 per cent of the concrete required is in place after two of the biggest pours ever made in Christchurch," Professor Phillips said.

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Provision for Expansion of Library

The James Hight Library will have a four-storey base covering nearly an acre of ground. Rising sheer above the middle part of the south side of the base will be a six-storey tower which will initially house the Departments of Classics, Philosophy, Political Science and Economics and the Faculties of Law and Commerce. It thus has built into it room for expansion for as the Library grows, it will take over space in the tower block.

The Library will be at the hub of the University—between the Students' Union, the planned buildings of the Arts Faculty and the Registry—and its very size will make it the dominant building on the site. The telescopic jib on the crane being used on the site will fail, even when fully extended, to reach the top of the building. It will rise 174 feet above ground level, 10 feet higher than the Bank of New Zealand in the Square and 54 feet higher than the top of the Chemistry-Physics building and will thus dominate the city's western skyline also. The gross area is 162,000 square feet.

The building provides for expansion of the Library to nearly double its initial capacity of 355,000 books and some 1100 reader places. Special provision for expansion is required because, unlike most libraries, University libraries are unable to discard much of the considerable quantity of books, periodicals and other material which they continually receive. Often they double their stock every 11 years, or even faster. In addition, the increase in the University's roll has also to be anticipated.

The interim use of the floors in the tower block for teaching departments meant that special provision had to be made for independent access. A pair of lifts and a stairway at the west end will serve the teaching departments only. The lifts and stairs at the east end will serve the Library only and will not have access to the tower floors until these are eventually taken over by the Library.

Some idea of the interior design of the Library may be gained from a visit to the Engineering School Library. The method of uniting a full floor and an extensive mezzanine floor proved satisfactory in the Engineering Library and the design will be used in the new Library. In



The Governor-General, Sir Arthur Porritt, laying the foundation stone of the James Hight Library at Ilam on Saturday. Behind him is the contractor, Mr C.S. Luney.

fact only one of the four storeys in the base will be a complete floor area. A large part of the ground floor on the north will be left open to provide an all-weather concourse and to give a sense of spaciousness through extensive vistas to nearby courtyard areas. The fourth floor, on which there will be an open area for outdoor

reading and relaxation, will be pierced by a large light well, 140ft by 50ft, which will flood natural light to the central part of the main floors just north of the tower. The third floor will have several mezzanine areas which, with the large second floor, will provide a spacious area with pleasant interior and exterior views.